[20 cont.]

755 wanurú spirits of the dead, who have arrows similar to those used
[753] by the Indians for hunting, which are shot at individuals to cause them sickness and pain.) The chant of the shaman is suspended only while he is sucking the affected parts of the sick person's body; then he immediately continues it again and returns to the spitting, the rubbing, and the sucking of the painful areas. The
755 sick person should be confined to his home, and furthermore his
758 bed should be enclosed by curtains in the manner of a second room within the main one. None may enter this place without the express consent of the shaman. However, the witch sometimes permits the presence of a relative of the sick person, generally the sister or the wife, who can act as nurse, especially during the moments when the shaman is resting. When he renews his curative acts, they must withdraw again.

755 The songs which the shaman intones tell how his spirit is
753 searching for the soul of the sick man which the spirit of sick-
[533] ness and death has carried away to unknown regions which are known only to it and to the spirit of the shaman. Often the sick person's spirit does not let itself be caught by the shaman, or it can happen that his soul is imprisoned, held by act and wish of the wanurú, which can cause the shaman a great deal of work. When through the intervention of his protector spirit he succeeds in recovering the spirit of the patient, he must pay the
755 wanurú that held it prisoner a ransom for its liberation. This
782 spirit will then ask through the mouth of the shaman for whatever gifts it may fancy. The shaman on his part transmits the oppressing spirit's demands to the sick man's relatives. These demands take the form of requests for animals — cattle, goats, sheep, etc., — of a certain color and special markings; ornaments of certain sizes and shapes; cloth, food and, at times, things very difficult to find. The sick man's relatives hurry to look everywhere for the requested items, and once found they present them to the shaman and place them, if they are animals, near him where he is "shamanizing." Other objects, such as
*756 necklaces, cloth, etc., are placed in his hands. If the orders
755 are not immediately complied with and in accordance with the slightest detail, the shaman suffers very severe fits and attacks and has to withdraw from assisting the patient. This is because,

[59 cont.]

843 845 A pregnant woman should never be present at or watch a burial, for if she does so, she will have a difficult childbirth: the infant's arrival will be delayed in a manner both painful and difficult for the mother.

755 758 764 Anyone who may have touched the corpse of a person whose death has not been natural – who has been murdered, for example – is prohibited from approaching the side of one who is sick, because this individual will die because of his presence. This prohibition is also extended to those who have directly assisted in the exhumation of human remains. Furthermore, both of these persons are strictly forbidden to come near [753] children [60] or places where they may be, because their presence, contaminated by the nature of the dead, will cause the children to fall ill.

843 825 Serpents also have magic influence on pregnant women. In this case it is not an influence destined to injure the unborn child but is directed against the mother herself, who feels in various ways in her own flesh the malignant action of the reptile. For instance, if a woman during her term of pregnancy sees a hunting snake [culebra cazadora] and remains looking at it for some time, her child will be born stupid. The explanation that the Indians give for this very generally accepted belief is that as this snake gives the impression of being stupid, because it does not attack people as other snakes do and does them no harm but confines itself to hunting young birds for food, it transmits this quality to the infant. A mother who encounters such a reptile should pretend not to have seen it and automatically look elsewhere.

825 843 845 If during this same period the mother-to-be should see any kind of snake (other than a hunting snake) she will suffer a miscarriage or some kind of painful mishap related to the delivery. To avoid these possible ills, the woman should try to step over the snake. If in spite of this difficulties in childbirth occur, then they resort to a curing method which consists in finding a similar snake, killing it, opening it up carefully, and localizing in the interior of its intestines the water that it has drunk, collecting this and taking it to the sick woman, so that after she has drunk it, her labor will be hastened and will then occur without any serious complications.